

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 191011Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO CUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9793
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY COMOMBO
AMEMBASSY KABUL
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DACCA 3854

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR BG US
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH BANLGADESH PRESIDENT ZIA: U.S.-
BANGLADESH RELATIONS

SUMMARY: IN MY FIRST BILATERAL MEETING WITH BANGLADESH PRESIDENT ZIA SINCE OUR TALK AFTER PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS, I SKETCHED OUT MY VIEW OF THE BASIS FOR U.S.-BANGLADESH RELATIONS, SEEKING BY MY EMPHASIS ON ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND OMIS- SION OF MENTION OF MILITARY MATTERS TO GET ACROSS THE CONCEPT THAT OUR AID WAS AT THE HEART OF OUR TIES. I SPOKE OF U.S. APPRECIATION FOR THE PROCESS HE HAD INITIATED TOWARD EFFEC- TIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. I MENTIONED THE IMPOR- TANCE WE ATTACH TO REGIONAL STABILITY, EMPHASIZING BOTH OUR SUPPORT TO SOUTH ASIAN BILATERAL NEGOTIATION AND TO THE SOVEREIGN EQUALITY OF THE PARTICIPANTS. I THEN MEN- TIONED SOME OF THE POTENTIAL TROUBLE SPOTS IN OUR RELA-
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TIONS: EFFECTIVE AID PERFORMANCE, AID TO THE POOR, HUMAN RIGHTS AND BANGLADESH POSITIONS ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE U.S. IN REPLY THE PRESIDENT SPOKE WARMLY OF OUR GOOD RELATIONS AND TALKED AT LENGTH AND OPTIMISTICALLY OF HIS PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT. HE ALSO EXPRESSED PRIDE IN HIS PROGRAM "TO BRING ABOUT DEMOCRACY". SPEAKING ON RELATIONS AMONG SOUTH ASIAN

COUNTRIES, HE ADVOCATED FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS TO SETTLE ALL DIFFERENCES, AND SECONDED MY EMPHASIS ON THE SOVEREIGN EQUALITY OF THE NEGOTIATING NATIONS. HE CAUTIOUSLY RECIPROCATED MY PROPOSAL FOR COOPERATION ON CERTAIN INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. THE PRESIDENT'S BEHAVIOR TOWARD ME SINCE MY ARRIVAL SUGGESTS THAT HE WANTS TO MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO DEVELOP CLOSER TIES WITH THE U.S., PERHAPS BETTER RELATIONS THAN WILL BE POSSIBLE. MY PRESENTATION MAY GIVE HIM SOME IDEA OF THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS; OUR FUTURE DIALOGUE SHOULD SPELL OUT THE REST. WHILE I DO NOT PLAN TO PURSUE THE PRESIDENT, I BELIEVE I CAN EXPECT THAT HE WILL WISH TO SEE ME FROM TIME TO TIME. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN ENSUED QUITE SOON AFTER I PRESENTED MY CREDENTIALS IN MARCH, I DEFERRED SEEING PRESIDENT ZIA UNTIL AFTER JUNE 3. I MET HIM AT A RECEPTION HE GAVE FOR LOCAL AMBASSADORS SEVERAL DAYS AFTER THAT DATE AND TWO DAYS LATER HE INVITED THE HIGH COMMISSIONERS OF BRITAIN, CANADA AND AUSTRALIA AND ME AND OUR WIVES FOR A QUIET AND INFORMAL DINNER AT HIS MODEST RESIDENCE IN THE CANTONMENT. THERE HE SPOKE AT LENGTH AND WITH PRIDE OF HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE PAST TWO AND A HALF YEARS AND OF THE SUCCESSFUL ELECTION PROCESS. AS I DID NOT HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH HIM ON THAT OCCASION I ASKED FOR AN CONFIDENTIAL

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APPOINTMENT (AND RECEIVED IT WITHIN SEVERAL HOURS) AND MET WITH HIM IN HIS OFFICE ON JUNE 17. ADVISER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SHAMSUL HAQ AND FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN WERE ALSO PRESENT BUT PARTICIPATED VERY LITTLE.

2. AFTER EXPRESSING MY APPRECIATION FOR THE WARMTH WITH WHICH MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT HAVE RECEIVED ME (IT HAS BEEN A MOST FRIENDLY ARRIVAL), I TOLD THE PRESIDENT I WISHED TO DISCUSS OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS, WHICH I THOUGHT WERE VERY GOOD. I THEN LAID OUT FOR HIM WHAT I THOUGHT WAS THE FOUNDATION IN THE U.S. FOR OUR GOOD RELATIONS, TRYING BY MY EMPHASIS ON OUR ECONOMIC RELATIONS TO GET ACROSS THE CONCEPT THAT OUR AID RELATIONSHIP WAS AT THE HEART OF OUR TIES. I NOTED THE SUPPORT I HAD FOUND FOR OUR ASSISTANCE AROUND THE COUNTRY IN THE U.S.; I MENTIONED THE FRIENDLY SUPPORT I HAD FOUND ON THE HILL AND TOLD HIM OF THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL COMMITMENT, ON BOTH MORAL AND NATIONAL INTEREST GROUNDS, TO U.S. ASSISTANCE TO UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES SUCH AS BANGLADESH. I TOLD HIM THAT I FELT THIS WAS A VALUABLE CONSTITUENCY WHICH WE BOTH SHOULD PROTECT AND NOURISH.

3. I THEN TOLD HIM THAT I BELIEVED THE U.S. ATTITUDE TOWARD STABILITY IN BANGLADESH AND IN THE REGION GENERALLY ALSO SUPPORTED GOOD RELATIONS. I SAID THAT HIS EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH LEADERSHIP AND EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONS TO CARRY OUT PROGRAMS TO BENEFIT THE BANGLADESH PEOPLE WERE APPRECIATED IN WASHINGTON. WE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE PROGRESS TOWARD REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, THE MOVEMENT AWAY FROM MARTIAL LAW, THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND THE RECENT ELECTIONS. THESE WERE ALL DIRECTED TOWARD INCREASED STABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH, WHICH WE SUPPORTED. I THEN ADDRESSED MYSELF TO SOUTH ASIA, SAYING THAT WE APPRECIATED THE WAY IN WHICH THE PRESIDENT, WITH HIS COLLEAGUES, IN THE OTHER SOUTH ASIAN NATIONS, HAD GONE ABOUT RESOLVING THEIR DIFFERENCES ON A BILATERAL BASIS. THIS HAD BEEN CONSTRUCTIVE AND HAD CONTRIBUTED TO A REGIONAL STABILITY IN WHICH THE NATIONS COULD CONCENTRATE ON THEIR DOMESTIC NEEDS. I SAID THAT THE USG VIEWED THIS AS A PROCESS AMONG SOVEREIGN EQUAL NATIONS AND WE VIEWED BANGLADESH IN THIS LIGHT. WE DID NOT CONSIDER THAT ANY NATION HAD ANY RIGHT TO HEGEMONY IN THE AREA. FINALLY, I SAID THAT THE U.S. CONSIDERED BANGLADESH, PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT OF ITS ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, TO BE AN IMPORTANT AND RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPANT IN THE GLOBAL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES IN U.N., NORTH-SOUTH, NON-ALIGNED AND ISLAMIC FORA.

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AMEMBASSY KABUL
CINCPAISNGHT

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4. I TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT I SAW SEVERAL SENSITIVE AREAS IN WHICH PROBLEMS COULD DEVELOP WHICH COULD UNDERMINE THE FOUNDATION OF OUR RELATIONS. I MENTIONED FOUR: THEIR PERFORMANCE IN OUR AID PROGRAMS; THE IMPORTANCE OF MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE POORER SECTIONS OF HIS SOCIETY; HUMAN RIGHTS (SEE SEPARATE TELEGRAM); AND THEIR POSITIONS ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO THE U.S.

5. THE PRESIDENT MADE A DISCOURSIVE REPLY WHICH NEVERTHELESS SPOKE TO MOST OF MY POINTS. HE SAID HE AGREED WITH VIRTUALLY ALL THE POINTS I HAD MADE. OUR RELATIONS WERE GOOD AND HE WANTED THEM TO STAY THAT WAY. HE EXPRESSED HIS GREAT APPRECIATION FOR OUR AID; THE U.S. WAS THE LARGEST DONOR OF AID TO BANGLADESH AND IT WAS BADLY NEEDED. HE TALKED AT SOME LENGTH (AS HE HAD AT DINNER SEVERAL NIGHTS BEFORE) ABOUT WHAT HE WAS DOING TO CARRY OUT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. HE SPOKE OF HIS GREAT EXPECTATIONS
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FOR BANGLADESHI AGRICULTURE (IN MY OPINION, OVER-OPTIMISTIC EXPECTATIONS) AND OF THE BEGINNING WHICH HAD BEEN MADE IN FAMILY PLANNING. (SEE SEPARATE TELEGRAM ON DEVELOPMENT ISSUES.)

6. RESPONDING TO MY COMMENTS ON INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN BANGLADESH, ZIA EXPLAINED THAT PRESENT CONDITIONS HERE MUST BE UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF THE NATION'S HISTORY: THE FIRST FIVE DIFFICULT YEARS; AND THE PROCESS THE HAD STATED ONLY TWO AND A HALF YEARS AGO. (HE DESCRIBED HOW ON NOVEMBER 7, 1975 HE HAD SAT DOWN AT A BROKEN DESK IN A SHATTERED OFFICE AND SAID TO HIS STAFF, "LET'S GET TO WORK.") HE DESCRIBED WITH PRIDE STEPS WHICH HAD BEEN TAKEN TO CREATE A GOVERNMENT AND, NOW, TO "BRING ABOUT DEMOCRACY". HE WAS PARTICULARLY ANIMATED WHEN DESCRIBING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND THE QUIET AND PEACEFUL WAY IN WHICH THEY WERE CONDUCTED (CONTRARY TO WHAT HAPPENS IN OTHER COUNTRIES, HE SAID, "I DID NOT PERMIT THE MILITARY TO BE INVOLVED IN ANY WAY IN CONDUCTING THE ELECTIONS."). HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE COVERAGE HE RECEIVED IN THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS AT ELECTION TIME.

HE KNEW THAT IN A DEMOCRACY THE PRESS HAD TO HAVE FREE ACCESS; HE WELCOMED THEM, UNDERSTOOD THAT THERE WOULD BE BOTH GOOD AND BAD IN THEIR REPORTS AND WAS SATISFIED WITH THE NET RESULT. HE TOLD ME THAT THE USUAL CONDITION AFTER ELECTIONS IN THIS REGION WAS FOR THE POLITICIANS TO FORGET ABOUT THEIR PLEDGES AND TO LOSE CONTACT WITH THE COUNTRYSIDE. HE PLANNED TO CHANGE THIS. HE GAVE PARTICULAR EMPHASIS TO HIS PLANS FOR DECENTRALIZATION, FOR INVOLVING LOCAL BODIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.

7. THE PRESIDENT REFERRED TO MY MENTIONING OF THE NEGOTIATED DIFFERENCES AMONG SOUTH ASIAN NATIONS. THE CONCEPT
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OF SOVEREIGN EQUALITY WAS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO BANGLADESH, HE SAID. HE APPRECIATED THE HELP WHICH THE U.S. HAD GIVEN ON THE FARAKKA ISSUE AND "ON THE BORDER". NOW, HE EXPLAINED, THERE SHOULD BE A GREATER EXCHANGE OF DELEGATIONS BETWEEN THE SOUTH ASIAN NATIONS; THERE SHOULD BE TRADE AGREEMENTS. THE NATIONS SHOULD RESOLVE THEIR REMAINING DIFFERENCES.

8. FINALLY, IN REGARD TO BANGLADESH'S POSITIONS ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT BANGLADESH BELONGED TO VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL GROUPS. HE WAS SURE, HOWEVER, THAT IT COULD PROVIDE SUPPORT TO U.S. MOVES FOR (AND HERE HE PAUSED TO SEARCH FOR THE RIGHT WORD) PEACE.

9. THEREAFTER THE CONVERSATION TURNED TO DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AND CERTAIN SPECIFIC ISSUES, (BELBAGCO, THE CHANCERY, AND THE CHOLERA RESEARCH LAB) ON WHICH SEPARATE MESSAGES WILL BE PREPARED.

10. COMMENT: THE PRESIDENT'S BEHAVIOR TOWARD ME SINCE MY ARRIVAL HAS SUGGESTED THAT HE WISHES TO MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO DEVELOP CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. KNOWING THIS, I SOUGHT TO USE OUR DISCUSSION TO INDICATE TO HIM MY SYMPATHETIC INTEREST IN HIS PROGRAMS, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TO INDICATE THOSE AREAS IN WHICH I BELIEVED RELATIONS COULD BE CLOSE, THE STEPS WHICH WOULD BE NECESSARY TO PROTECT SUCH CLOSE RELATIONS, AND (INDIRECTLY BY OMISSION) THOSE AREAS IN WHICH COOPERATION IS UNLIKELY. WHILE ALL THREE OF ZIA'S MILITARY CHIEFS HAVE RAISED MILITARY SALES WITH ME (I HAVE DISCOURAGED THEM FROM EXPECTING ANY CHANGE IN OUR POLICY), ZIA DID NOT EVEN ALLUDE TO ANY MILITARY NEED. I CONCLUDE THAT HE UNDERSTANDS. I SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT HE DESIRES A POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP WHICH MAY EXTEND BEYOND WHAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO OFFER. HIS ALLUSION TO HIS DESIRE TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES (SEE SEPARATE

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MESSAGE) IN AN ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT HE DESIRES AND WHAT WE MAY BE UNABLE TO GIVE.

11. ONE IS IMPRESSED BY ZIA'S SINCERITY AND HIS WARM AND QUIET MANNER. HE IS OBVIOUSLY ENJOYING HIS JOB AND THAT JOB HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY THE JOB OF A POLITICIAN. HE MADE THE USUAL ALLUSION TO BEING ONLY A MILITARY MAN, BUT HE IS CLEARLY NOW MUCH MORE THAN THAT AND IS LEARNING POLITICS RAPIDLY AND HAVING SOME SUCCESS AT IT. ONE IS ALSO IMPRESSED BY AN ELEMENT OF UNREALITY IN ZIA'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT. HE SPEAKS IN BROAD GENERALIZATIONS AND IN GREAT SOUTH ASIAN SWEEPS OF OPTIMISM. HE IMPRESSES ME AS A MAN WHO HAS BEEN ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL TOO LONG AND WHO SHOULD COME HOME AND DIG INTO THE ROUTINE OF GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION FOR A WHILE. IT IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER OR NOT HE WILL; HE SPOKE OF GOING BACK ON HIS SPEECHMAKING CIRCUIT SOON.
SCHNEIDER

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Message Attributes

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